

rest of Europe. It was commonly used by chroniclers in the West from the time of Bede, except in the Iberian Peninsula, where the chroniclers retained the Spanish era for a long time. The beginning of the year differed from place to place: December 25, March 1, Easter, or January 1. By the end of the 16th century January 1 was commonly accepted as New Year's Day in this era, following the example of France, where it was made official in 1563.

The era of the Ascension, found among the Greeks and the Syrians, began in A.D. 31.

*Jewish World Era.* This era began on the 1st of Tishri 3761 B.C. Its invention appears to go back, at the earliest, to the latter half of the 4th Christian century.

*Mohammedan Era or Era of the Hegira.* Year 1 of this era began on the 1st of Moharem (1st month of the Moslem year), July 16, 622, marking the day arbitrarily set for the commemoration of Mohammed's \*hegira (Arabic *hijra*), or flight from Mecca to Medina; the flight actually took place 68 days later. The era was instituted by Caliph Omar. It has been in continuous use by Christians living under Moslem rule (in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Persia); as well as by the Moslems. Since the Moslem year consists of 12 lunar months totaling 354 or 355 days, special tables must be used for converting a date in the Mohammedan era into a date in the Christian era. (See CALENDARS OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST.)

For eras of cyclic origin that, though without historical basis, were nevertheless commonly used in daily life and by the chroniclers, see CHRONOLOGY, MEDIEVAL, 1.

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[V. GRUMEL]

## ERASMUS, DESIDERIUS

Humanist, classical and patristic scholar, first editor of the Greek New Testament; b. Rotterdam, Holland, Oct. 27, 1466; d. Basel, Switzerland, July 12, 1536. He was an illegitimate child, and it seems probable that his father was a priest. Educated first at Gouda, and then from 1475 under the \*Brethren of the Common Life, Erasmus remained at Deventer for 8 years; there is no doubt that this tradition shaped his later educational ideals.

**Career.** In 1483 his parents died; his guardians sent him to a school at s' Hertogenbosch, also maintained by the Brethren. In 1487 he was persuaded, in part by a friend and in part by his guardian, to enter the Augustinian monastery of \*canons regular at Steyn. Although lacking a genuine vocation, he was no doubt partly attracted by the ordered life of the monastery; he found



Desiderius Erasmus, engraving by Albrecht Dürer, 1529

some congenial companions, and he had opportunities for the study of Christian and classical literature. However, even before his ordination (April 25, 1492) he seems to have found the intellectual horizon too confined and was ready to seek a wider opportunity for the development of his intellectual interests. This came in 1494 with an invitation from the bishop of Cambrai to enter his service. Erasmus received a dispensation from residence in his monastery, which he never entered again. Within the year he had persuaded the bishop to allow him to go to Paris to study for a degree in theology.

When Erasmus arrived in Paris in 1495, he took up residence in Montaigu College, where he soon found little to his liking the discipline imposed by the director, Jean Standonck. Equally uncongenial were the lectures on scholastic philosophy and theology at the university. Erasmus tried to escape from this environment by cultivating prominent literary figures, among whom were Italian humanist exiles who were beginning to introduce new standards of taste. At the same time, in order to improve his economic circumstances, he began to take pupils for instruction in Latin. These included some wealthy and highly placed Englishmen, and through one of them he received an invitation to visit England in 1499.

This first visit to England marks a decisive stage in Erasmus's intellectual development. He had an opportunity to meet such men as John \*Colet, Thomas \*More, and Archbishop \*Warham. Through these friends he came into more direct contact with the heritage of the Italian \*Renaissance and realized what might be achieved by applying to the great texts of the Christian tradition the same methods of exegesis that the Italian humanists had applied to the classics. To this

Erasmus determined to devote the rest of his life to his English visit dates his serious application to study of Greek. A few years later his ambition to acquire a more accurate knowledge of the basic texts of the Christian tradition was further confirmed by his sojourn in a monastery in the Low Countries of a MS. Lorenzo Valla's *Annotations on the New Testament*. Erasmus had already been greatly influenced by Valla's views on the uses of philology, and he then published the *Annotations* in Paris in 1505 with an enthusiastic introduction.

His English visit was the first of Erasmus's many voyages of residence. He returned to France in 1500, spent some years there and in the Low Countries. His second visit to England in 1505-06 was followed by his years in Italy (1506-09), during which he was associated with the Aldine Academy in Venice and had an opportunity to visit the Rome of Julius II. From Rome Erasmus returned to England on the accession of Henry VIII, in the hope of sharing in the royal patronage. In 1511 he settled in Queen's College, Cambridge, where he spent 2½ years. Leaving England again in 1514, he went first to Basel and then for brief periods to Louvain and to Holland. In 1521 he returned to Basel, where he remained for the next 8 years, his long residence in one place. The official acceptance of the Reformation in Basel in 1529 caused his retreat to Burg, where he spent the next 6 years.

His refusal to identify himself with any of the national cultures in Europe was characteristic of Erasmus. Despite invitations from France, England, and the Papacy, he preferred to retain his independence. His increasing literary fame enabled him to lead the life of a man of letters unattached to any institution. The scholar who had had to take in pupils for a living became a comparatively wealthy man through the rewards bestowed on him by many patrons.

**Works.** At the height of his fame, Erasmus occupied a position in the history of European literature rivaled only by that of Voltaire. In every country adding followers accepted his leadership. His letters provide the most comprehensive source for the intellectual history of his age. Of the many works that secured his reputation, the first to bring him public notice was the *Adages*. This collection of classical proverbs with an explanation of their meaning furnished students with a convenient handbook and digest of the subject matter of classical literature, arranged under such headings as Fortune, love, modesty, liberality, war. In 1508 Erasmus brought out at the Aldine Press (see MANUSCRIPTS) in Venice a second edition containing three times as many adages as the first and reflecting what he had learned from the refugee Greek scholars at Venice. This remained one of the most popular of Erasmus's works; it went through many editions and its influence can be traced in the vernacular literature of every European country in the 16th century.

In the *Enchiridion militis christiani*, first published in Antwerp (1503), Erasmus expounded his conception of Christianity infused with the spirit of the Gospels. This little treatise presented life as a struggle between the flesh and the spirit. Here is found the combination of piety and learning in the *docta pietas*, which Erasmus emphasized in so many of his later works. In the analysis of the human condition in the *Enchiridion* he follows, on the whole,

\*Origen and the Greek Fathers, who had a profound effect on his thinking. Erasmus later maintained that his chief purpose in writing the book had been to remedy the errors of those who confused ceremonial observances with true piety. The conclusion of the treatise is that there is a regular progression through nature to grace and that the philosophy of Christ depends on the inner action of the spirit rather than on conformity to external rites.

The message of the *Enchiridion* was reiterated in a very different form in the *Praise of Folly*, which has remained the work by which Erasmus is perhaps best known to the general public. It was composed in 1509 while Erasmus was traveling from Italy to England and was dedicated to Thomas More with the pun on his name contained in the title *Encomium moriae*. Erasmus imagined Folly personified delivering a classical oration in her defense. This device gave him an opportunity to satirize many aspects of contemporary society, both ecclesiastical and lay. In the end, however, Folly becomes serious and makes her hearers recognize that what is, in the eyes of the world, the greatest folly, namely Christianity, is in reality the highest wisdom.

The same themes were taken up in many of Erasmus's *Colloquies* of which the first authorized edition was published in 1519. Later the dramatic possibilities of these little dialogues appealed to Erasmus, and he created a whole gallery of characters, through the medium of whose conversation he managed to take up all the great issues of politics and religion of his generation. The style of these compositions was particularly consonant with Erasmus's character. The dialogue form emphasized the rhetorical arts of persuasion that had been so central to the educational curriculum of the Renaissance. Furthermore, this form had the advantage that the views of the author could be concealed beneath those attributed to one of the characters.

The homilies, satires, and colloquies that Erasmus wrote did not interrupt the course of his scholarly work. The number of his editions of classical and patristic works is formidable. Some of these represented no great labor on his part, such as the Basel *Aristotle* of 1531, to which Erasmus contributed only a preface. Others represented years of patient work. What the Aldine Press in Venice had accomplished at the turn of the century for classical literature, Froben in Basel aspired to do for patristic literature, and it was upon Erasmus that his establishment chiefly depended. Of the patristic works edited by Erasmus, the most important were the *Jerome* of 1516, the *Augustine* of 1529, the *Chrysostom* of 1530, and the *Origen* of 1536. To the edition of \*Jerome, with whom he felt a kind of affinity, Erasmus devoted a particular effort, not only emending the text and providing an extensive commentary, but also contributing a preface with an account of the life and works of the translator of the Vulgate.

Erasmus had decided, perhaps as early as his edition of Valla's *Annotations*, to occupy himself with the text of the New Testament. This project grew to be an edition of the Greek text with a new Latin translation and a commentary on which Erasmus was seriously at work from 1512. The *Novum instrumentum*, which appeared in 1516, was the first published version of the Greek text. Erasmus's work is far from the standards of modern scholarship in both method and content. He estab-



lished his text on a limited number of MSS, rather haphazardly consulted; his knowledge of Greek was insufficient to deal with many philological problems; his footnotes contained frequent irrelevant digressions. The work, nevertheless, was of epoch-making importance. His Greek text was the basis of many of the vernacular versions produced during the 16th century. See BIBLE IV (TEXTS AND VERSIONS), 3.

**Erasmus and the Reformation.** The *Novum instrumentum* was dedicated to Leo X, whom Erasmus hailed as introducing a new age in which scholarship and the arts would flourish and peace would reign. These hopes, however, were disappointed by the religious revolution in the outbreak of which his own work had played a very large part. His widely read criticism of abuses in the Church, his revolt against formalism, and his appeal for a restoration of an earlier and purer piety awoke an enthusiastic response among his contemporaries and the younger generation. One of his readers was Martin Luther, who had sought Erasmus's approval as early as 1516 but felt that "with him, human things were of greater value than divine" ("humana praevalent in eo plus quam divina"). In 1519 he begged for Erasmus's support in his struggle with the Curia. Erasmus replied not very cordially, professing ignorance of Luther's writings, but declaring that he had urged moderation in influential quarters.

With the papal condemnation and Luther's treatises of 1520, Erasmus's attitude changed. He feared the consequences of what he now saw to be a revolution, and he deplored Luther's appeal to the general public. As the Lutheran movement took shape and the gap between Rome and Wittenberg widened, Erasmus's position became increasingly uncomfortable. Many of his former friends, such as \*Dürer and \*Hutten, condemned him for not supporting Luther. Others, such as \*Aleandro, once his roommate in Venice, accused him of having attacked the basic institutions of the Church and prepared the way for Luther. He was urged by friends on both sides to clarify his position and at first seems to have believed that it was still possible to deal with these great issues in the manner of the *Colloquies*. The *Inquisitio de fide* probably represents his attempt to explore in a dialogue the implications of the religious division. He soon saw, however, that this congenial approach was no longer possible, and he composed his treatise on the freedom of the will, published in 1524, to define his religious position against that of Luther. Luther replied with the *De servo arbitrio*, in which he disdainfully repudiated the theological arguments of Erasmus. This elicited from Erasmus the first and second *Hyperaspistes*, in which he elaborated his original argument. During the same period he had to defend himself from the attacks of his enemies on the other side, especially Alberto Pio, Prince of Carpi, and the Spanish monks.

In spite of these controversies and the bitterness that Erasmus had to face in the last years of his life, he continued his literary and scholarly publications, producing, among other works, in the years at Freiburg the treatise on preaching, *Ecclesiastes*, and the edition of Origen. It was to see these volumes through the press that he returned to Basel in 1535. There he died in the house of Froben, surrounded by his friends. In the absence of a priest, he did not receive the Last Sacra-

ments. He was buried in the cathedral at Basel, which had been converted into a Protestant church.

**Significance.** Erasmus's significance has been as variously estimated as it was ambiguous in his own lifetime. Rightly regarded as one of those who had prepared the way for the religious revolution, he nevertheless repudiated decisively the work of Luther and \*Zwingli. Although he was offered a cardinal's hat by Paul III, his work was put on the Index by the Council of Trent. To the Enlightenment he appeared a figure in the history of European rationalism. He has often been accused of having been wavering and cowardly in the great crisis of his generation. In fact, however, he maintained with remarkable consistency throughout his life the position defined by his ideals as a Christian humanist. As a Christian, he declared again and again that his whole life had been devoted to the cause of the gospel. He professed always his willingness to submit to the authority of the Church, even though he never committed himself in detail on how that authority was to be defined. Many of the points on which his orthodoxy was questioned were clarified only after his death by the decisions of the Council of \*Trent. As a humanist, he believed that even the deepest commitments should be defended, and the cause of truth advanced by persuasion rather than by force. It was the tragedy of his later life that he pleaded for peace and unity in a Christian world that had become so deeply divided that a continuing dialogue was no longer possible.

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ary apparatus that was available for Dionysius, no reproach is due him for his mistake. On the other hand, no one can seriously think of attempting to alter the Christian era to accord with the correct date of the birth of Jesus, even if this date could be accurately determined. The era is commended by its convenience, especially since the practise has arisen of reckoning backward as well as forward from its epoch; that is, of dating events before its inception, according to years before the birth of Christ (*ante Christum natum*). This custom came about at a comparatively late date; the well-known historian and chronologer J. C. Gatterer of Göttingen about 1780 dated events before the birth of Christ in "years of the world."

World eras, the epoch of which is the year of the creation of the world, have been prevalent in great number. To mention only two, a rather wide vogue was enjoyed by the world era of

**Other** Panodorus, who reckoned 5,904 years  
**Eras.** from Adam to the year 412 A.D.  
(about which time he lived); his years

began with Aug. 29, corresponding to the First of Thoth, or the Egyptian new year. Afterward, this era is usually termed the Antiochian, sometimes the Alexandrian. Its new year was also transferred to Sept. 1, in which case the eight latter months of its year 5493 are the eight former months of the year one of our chronology. More important than this is the Byzantine world era, which long served as the standard of computation in the Eastern Empire, in Russia, among the Albanians, Servians, and Modern Greeks. It counts sixteen years in excess of the Antiochian era, though likewise beginning the year with Sept. 1; its year 5509 began with Sept. 1 of the year one before Christ. This era was in use in Russia till 1700; whence it originated appears not to be known.

Attempts to compute the year of the creation of the world on the basis of figures supplied in the Old Testament (the ages of the patriarchs, etc.), have been made by chronologists almost down to the present time. Scalliger and Calvisius hold the year one of our era to be the year 3950 from the creation; Petavius, the year 3984; Usher, the year 4004; Frank, 4182. Historians once used one or another of these systems in dating events, especially for the time before Christ; thus Gatterer, mentioned above, computed, in his earlier works, according to the world era of Petavius; in his later ones, according to that of Frank.

Of the eras employed in the Christian Church, two others may be mentioned briefly. The one is the Diocletian, already cited above, which originated in Egypt. Its epoch is the First of Thoth (Aug. 29 of the Julian calendar), of 284 A.D. It numbers the years from the accession of Diocletian, though the first year of Diocletian is not reckoned from the day of his proclamation (Sept. 17), but, in accordance with a generally observed custom, from the new year's day of this year. As this era gained circulation in the Christian Church, it came to be used, by way of reminder that Diocletian had cruelly persecuted the Christians, *era martyrum*. The same era continued in observance, to some extent, as late as the eighth century. Besides this, the Spanish era was prevalent in Spain from the beginning of the fifth century, and in

particular among the West Goths. Its epoch is the year 716 A.U.C., or 38 B.C. It is used, among others, by Isidore of Seville in his *Historia Gothorum*, and traces of its observance occur into the twelfth century.

All these chronological systems had to yield, step by step, to that of Dionysius; and for a long time past, it has been the custom

**The** throughout Christendom to compute  
**New Year.** in years after (and before) the birth of Christ. In the light of this simple and unequivocal reckoning, it was not advantageous to forego the uniform practise of beginning the year with Jan. 1, as Dionysius had done in agreement with the Roman calendar. As a matter of fact, Jan. 1 appears to have maintained its place as the beginning of the year in civil life everywhere, nor have any calendars been found with a different initial date; moreover, Jan. 1 was named new year's day (see NEW YEAR'S FESTIVAL). Nevertheless other initial dates came into official use; especially Mar. 25 and Dec. 25 were favorite dates for beginning the year in the Middle Ages and down to modern times. [In England the change from Mar. 25 was made by act of 1751.] In the case of Mar. 25, we have still to distinguish between the *calculus Pisanus*, which computed from Mar. 25 before our new year, and the *calculus Florentinus* which computed from Mar. 25 after our new year. Other new year's dates are Mar. 1, Sept. 1, and the Saturday before Easter. Luther computed the year from Dec. 25; so that, for instance, the dating of a letter *die innocentium* 1530 denotes, by our mode of reckoning, Dec. 25, 1529. More detailed information as to these new year's dates is to be sought in text-books of chronology; a good synopsis is furnished by H. Grottefend in *Taschenbuch der Zeitrechnung* (Hanover, 1898), pp. 11 sqq.

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#### ERASMUS.

- Early Life (§ 1)
- Studies and Travels (§ 2).
- Basis of Literary Activity (§ 3).
- Various Works (§ 4).
- Attitude Toward the Reformation (§ 5).
- Relations with Luther (§ 6).
- Doctrine of the Eucharist (§ 7).
- Closing Years (§ 8).

Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus, Dutch humanist and theologian, was born at Rotterdam, Holland, Oct. 27, probably 1466; d. at Basel, Switzerland, July 12, 1536. Information as to his family and early life comes from a few meager accounts written or suggested by himself at a somewhat advanced age and from many but vague references in his writings at all periods of his life. There



seems good reason to believe that the tone of self-pity that pervades all these accounts was assumed for purposes at which one may guess, but as to which one can not be certain. He was doubtless born out of wedlock, well cared for by his parents till their early death, and then given the best education open to a young man of his day in a series of monastic or semimonastic schools. All this early education is made by him in the light of later experience to appear like one long conspiracy to force him into the monastic life, but there is no other evidence for this, and recent criticism has suggested ample motives for his desire to give his life-history this peculiar turn. He was admitted to the priesthood and took the monastic vows at about the age of twenty-five, but there is no record that he ever exercised the priestly functions, and monasticism was one of the chief objects of his attack in his lifelong assault upon the evils of the Church.

Almost immediately after his consecration the way was opened to him for study at the University of Paris, then the chief seat of the later scholastic learning, but already beginning to feel the influence of the revived classic culture of Italy. From this time on Erasmus led the life of an independent scholar, independent of country, of academic ties, of religious allegiance, of everything that could interfere with the free development of his intellect and the freedom of his literary expression. The chief centers of his activity were Paris, Louvain, England, and Basel; yet it could never be said that he was identified with any one of these. His residences in England were fruitful in the making of lifelong friendships with the leaders of English thought in the stirring days of Henry VIII.—John Colet, Thomas More, Thomas Linaere, and William Grocyn. He held at Cambridge an honorable position as Lady Margaret professor of divinity, and there seems to have been no reason except his unconquerable aversion to a routine life, why he should not have spent his days as an English professor. He was offered many positions of honor and profit in the academic world, but declined them all on one or another pretext, preferring the uncertain, but as it proved sufficient rewards of independent literary activity. In Italy he spent three years (1506-09), part of the time in connection with the publishing house of Aldus Manutius at Venice, but otherwise with far less active association with Italian scholars than might have been expected. The residence at Louvain exposed Erasmus to the petty criticism of men nearer to him in blood and political connections, but hostile to all the principles of literary and religious progress to which he was devoting his life. From this lack of sympathy, which he always represented as persecution, he sought refuge in the more congenial atmosphere of Basel, where under the shelter of Swiss hospitality he could express himself with freedom and where he was always surrounded by devoted friends. Here he was associated for many years with the great publisher Froben, and hither came the multitude of his admirers from all quarters of Europe.

Erasmus's literary productivity began comparatively late in his life. It was not until he had made himself master of a telling Latin style

3. Basis of that he undertook to express himself on all current subjects of literature and religion. His revolt against the forms of Church life did not proceed

from any questionings as to the truth of the traditional doctrine, nor from any hostility to the organization of the Church itself. Rather, he felt called upon to use his learning in a purification of the doctrine and in a liberalizing of the institutions of Christianity. He began as a scholar, trying to free the methods of scholarship from the rigidity and formalism of medieval traditions; but he was not satisfied with this. He conceived of himself as, above all else, a preacher of righteousness. It was his lifelong conviction that what was needed to regenerate Europe was sound learning applied frankly and fearlessly to the administration of public affairs in Church and State. It is this conviction that gives unity and consistency to a life which at first sight seems to have been full of fatal contradictions. Erasmus was a marked individual, holding himself aloof from all entangling obligations; yet he was in a singularly true sense the center of the literary movement of his time. In his correspondence he put himself in touch with more than five hundred men of the highest importance in the world of politics and of thought, and his advice on all kinds of subjects was eagerly sought, if none too readily followed.

Naturally, Erasmus has been most widely known for his critical and satirical writings, such as the "Praise of Folly" (Paris, 1509) and

4. Various many of the *Colloquia*, which appeared at intervals from 1500 on. These

appeal to a wider audience and deal with matters of wider human interest. Yet their author seems to have regarded them as the trifles of his intellectual product, the play of his leisure hours. His more serious writings begin early with the *Enchiridion Militis Christiani*, the "Manual (or Dagger) of the Christian Gentleman" (1503). In this little volume Erasmus outlines the views of the normal Christian life which he was to spend the rest of his days in elaborating. The key-note of it all is sincerity. The chief evil of the day, he says, is formalism, a respect for traditions, a regard for what other people think essential, but never a thought of what the true teaching of Christ may be. The remedy is for every man to ask himself at each point: what is the essential thing? and to do this without fear. Forms are not in themselves evil. It is only when they hide or quench the spirit that they are to be dreaded. In his examination of the special dangers of formalism, Erasmus pays his respects to monasticism, saint-worship, war, the spirit of class, the foibles of "society," in the fashion which was to make his later reputation as a satirist, but the main impression of the *Enchiridion* is distinctly that of a sermon. A companion piece to the *Enchiridion* is the *Institutio Principis Christiani* (Basel, 1516), written as advice to the young king Charles of Spain, later the emperor Charles V. Here Erasmus applies the same general principles

of honor and sincerity to the special functions of the Prince, whom he represents throughout as the servant of the people. While in England Erasmus began the systematic examination of manuscripts of the New Testament to prepare for a new edition and Latin translation. This edition was published by Froben of Basel in 1516 and was the basis of most of the scientific study of the Bible during the Reformation period (see BIBLE TEXT, II., 2, § 1). It was the first attempt on the part of a competent and liberal-minded scholar to ascertain what the writers of the New Testament had actually said. Erasmus dedicated his work to Pope Leo X. as a patron of learning, to whom such an application of scholarship to religion must be welcome, and he justly regarded this work as his chief service to the cause of a sound Christianity. Immediately after he began the publication of his Paraphrases of the New Testament, a popular presentation of the contents of the several books. These, like all the writings of Erasmus, were in Latin, but they were at once translated into the common languages of the European peoples, a process which received the hearty approval of Erasmus himself.

The outbreak of the Lutheran movement in the year following the publication of the New Testament brought the severest test of

**5. Attitude** Erasmus's personal and scholarly character. It made the issue between European society and the Roman Church system so clear that no man could quite escape the summons to range himself on one side or the other of the great debate. Erasmus, at the height of his literary fame, was inevitably called upon to take sides, but partisanship in any issue which he was not at liberty himself to define was foreign equally to his nature and his habits. In all his criticism of clerical follies and abuses he had always carefully hedged himself about with protests that he was not attacking church institutions themselves and had no enmity toward the persons of churchmen. The world had laughed at his satire, but only a few obstinate reactionaries had seriously interfered with his activities. He had a right to believe that his work so far had commended itself to the best minds and also to the dominant powers in the religious world. There can be no doubt that Erasmus was in sympathy with the main points in the Lutheran criticism of the Church. For Luther personally he had and expressed the greatest respect, and Luther always spoke with admiration of his superior learning. Luther would have gone to great lengths in securing his cooperation in a work which seemed only the natural outcome of his own. When Erasmus hesitated or refused this seemed to the upright and downright Luther a mean avoidance of responsibility explicable only as cowardice or unsteadiness of purpose, and this has generally been the Protestant judgment of later days. On the other hand the Roman Catholic party was equally desirous of holding on to the services of a man who had so often declared his loyalty to the principles it was trying to maintain, and his half-heartedness in declaring himself now brought upon him naturally the suspicion of disloyalty from this side.

Recent judgments of Erasmus, however, have shown how consistent with all his previous practice his attitude toward the Reformation really was. The evils he had combated were either those of form, such as had long been a subject of derision by all sensible men, or they were evils of a kind that could be cured only by a long and slow regeneration in the moral and spiritual life of Europe. Get rid of the absurdities, restore learning to its rights, insist upon a sound practical piety, and all these evils would disappear: this was the programme of the "Erasmian Reformation." No one could question its soundness or its desirability. Its fatal lack was that it failed to offer any tangible method of applying these principles to the existing church system. This kind of reform had been tried long enough, and men were impatient of further delay. When Erasmus was charged—and very justly—with having "laid the egg that Luther hatched" he half admitted the truth of the charge, but said he had expected quite another kind of a bird.

In their early correspondence Luther expressed in unmeasured terms his admiration for all Erasmus had done in the cause of a sound and

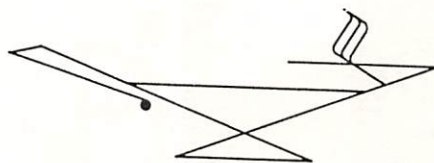
**6. Relations** reasonable Christianity, and exhorted with him now to put the seal upon his work. Luther, by definitely casting in his lot with the Lutheran party. Erasmus replied

with many expressions of regard, but declined to commit himself to any party attitude. His argument was that to do so would endanger his position as a leader in the movement for pure scholarship which he regarded as his real work in life. Only through that position as an independent scholar could he hope to influence the reform of religion. The constructive value of Luther's work was mainly in furnishing a new doctrinal basis for the hitherto scattered attempts at reform. In reviving the half forgotten principle of the Augustinian theology Luther had furnished the needed impulse to that personal interest in religion which is the essence of Protestantism. This was precisely what Erasmus could not approve. He dreaded any change in the doctrine of the Church and believed that there was room enough within existing formulas for the kind of reform he valued most. Twice in the course of the great discussion he allowed himself to enter the field of doctrinal controversy, a field foreign alike to his nature and his previous practice. One of the topics formally treated by him was the freedom of the will, the crucial point in the whole Augustinian system. In his *De libero arbitrio* *Διατριβή sive collatio* (1524), he analyzes with great cleverness and in perfect good temper the Lutheran exaggeration, as it seemed to him, of the obvious limitations upon human freedom. As his habit was, he lays down both sides of the argument and shows that each had its element of truth. His position was practically that which the Church had always taken in its dealing with the problem of sin: that Man was bound to sin, but that after all he had a right to the forgiving mercy of God, if only he would seek this through the means offered him by the Church itself. It was an easy-going Semi-Pelagianism, humane in its practice, but opening the way to those very laxities and perversions which Eras-



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US, i-raz'mas, **Desiderius** (c. 1469–1536), Roman Catholic reformer, writer on the Fathers, classical scholar, and greatest Renaissance humanists. In a period of controversy, his message was too moderate to give him the impact of reformers such as Luther. Yet he became a major influence on the Protestant Reformation.

**Years.** Erasmus was born in Gouda, on Oct. 27, probably in 1469. He was the illegitimate son of a Dutch priest named Gerard. The son avoided using the father's name, and on his 35th birthday the name Desiderius Erasmus.

In his own works Erasmus speaks disdainfully of his guardians, countrymen, teachers, and his own intellectual capabilities. The harshness of his early years, characterized by isolation with himself and his surroundings, shaped his whole life. He spent nearly 10 years in the Brethren of the Common Life, despite his disclaimers, their emphasis on piety and primitive, simple Christianity formed an essential part of his religious outlook from an early age. At the Brethren's house in Deventer, Erasmus encountered the humanist Rudolf Agricola, whose intense humanity, characterized by a devotion to classical learning and an opposition to medieval religious dogma, greatly inspired Erasmus.

1483–1484, Erasmus' parents died of the plague, finally yielding to the demand of his guardians, who had squandered his inheritance. Erasmus entered the Augustinian monastery of Steyn, late in 1487.

Erasmus speaks disparagingly of monastic life, and it will be that his lifelong ill health resulted from monastic ascetic practices. Still, he took his vows after a year, a decision he regretted later. Familiarizing himself with classical and humanist scholarship, he wrote in a Latin style. Shortly after he was in April 1492, he was granted leave to become secretary to the bishop of Cambrai, Berghen. He never returned to the monastery.

He seems to have been unhappy and, with the bishop's support, he entered the Collège de Montaigu of the University of Paris in 1495. Abhorring the rigid scholastic theology, the louse-infected food, and the stale food, he nevertheless obtained his bachelor of theology degree in 1498. The following year he left for a short time in the company of his patron, the 4th Baron Mountjoy.

**Erasmus as a Humanist.** This first of six visits to England was undoubtedly the turning point in Erasmus' life. He met and became a friend of Desiderius Erasmus, the leading humanists. Though probably more of a friend, Erasmus was increasingly influenced by Erasmus, whose lectures on St. Paul led him to his own resolve to apply himself to patristic studies.

He returned to Paris, where he published the first edition of his *Adages*, the collection of Latin proverbs that brought him worldwide fame. In 1503, he published his version of Cicero's *De officiis*, the first of many classical works he edited. In 1503, he composed *Militia christiani*, a statement of his ideal Christianity emphasizing simple piety, which he termed the "philosophy of Christ." This was a direct challenge to the institutionalized religion of



Desiderius Erasmus, portrait by Hans Holbein.

the Catholic Church, this work is an important document of the Catholic Reformation.

By 1505 he was back in England, renewing contacts with Colet and More, gathering Greek manuscripts for reproduction, and beginning his epochal Latin translation of the Greek New Testament, the *Novum instrumentum* (1516). From England, Erasmus traveled to Italy, where he received a doctorate in divinity from the University of Turin in 1506. His most profitable time, however, was spent at Venice at the academy of the great printer Aldus Manutius, whose enlarged edition (1508) of the *Adages* greatly increased Erasmus' fame. Unhappy in Italy although he had become closely associated with many of the leading figures of the Renaissance there, Erasmus returned to England in 1509. While convalescing in More's home from an illness that constantly plagued him, Erasmus composed that masterpiece of humor and irony that has delighted generations of scholars, *Moriae encomium* (*Praise of Folly*). An engrossing satire on human nature, this literary gem is improperly viewed by some as a basic source of our knowledge of Erasmus' thought.

In 1514 he moved to Basel, joining forces with both Johann Froben, thereafter his main publisher, and Beatus Rhenanus, who served as his assistant until Erasmus' death. From Froben's presses in 1516 came the completed *Novum instrumentum*. Unintentionally Erasmus' most damaging blow to the church since it pointed up the Vulgate's inadequacies, the *Novum instrumentum* provided a weapon for the arsenal of the Protestant Reformation. A nine-volume edition of Jerome (1516), the first of the many editions of the Fathers, also published by Froben, was followed by editions of the works of Irenaeus



(1526), Ambrose (1527), Augustine (1528), Chrysostom (1530), Basil (1532), and Origen (1536).

**Confrontation with Luther.** From 1517 to 1521, Erasmus was at the University of Louvain, where he learned of Luther's revolt against the church. Having much in common with Luther, Erasmus managed with difficulty to take an ambiguous stand, claiming ignorance of Luther's writings. While Erasmus was at Louvain, his *Colloquies* (1518), stories pillorying church, society, and politics, was circulated in Basel. A new form of satire, the *Colloquies* became the most popular book of the age. By 1521, Erasmus had returned to Basel, where he continued to work for the golden age of literature he envisioned.

The defection of so many leading humanists to work for religious reform forced Erasmus to take a decisive stand regarding Luther. Erasmus lacked the courage and inclination to support disruptive reform. After much urging, in 1524 he published a light, hurried treatise, *On Free Will*, against Luther. This treatise reveals the characteristic moderation of Erasmus, but also makes clear his inability to deal either with the profundity or the passion of the issues of the theological struggle. Luther's answer to *On Free Will* was a superior work, and it became clear that the Erasmian ideal of reforming church and society had been surpassed. Henceforth he and all he stood for was on the defensive, and his last years were made increasingly difficult by attacks from all sides, even from his former allies.

Erasmus, nevertheless, resolutely continued to work, isolating himself from the furor of the age and desperately hoping that the "madness of the theologians" would be overcome by his pleas for peace. When the Reformation enveloped Basel in 1529, Erasmus fled to Freiburg in Breisgau. His productivity hardly slackened, but he was a broken and disgruntled man. He finally returned to Basel, where he died on July 12, 1536.

**Character and Significance.** The fame of Erasmus continues to grow despite the failure of his fondest endeavors. He was an idealist, unable or unwilling to grasp the realities of life. He gave himself to the restoration of theology and primitive Christianity, naively assuming that mere exposure to good works of literature would bring the desired reform. Hypersensitive about his role in the new age he envisioned, Erasmus bitterly resented both the failure of his program and any who argued against its validity. He was personally excessively fastidious and petty, and at times even pathological about his reputation. But part of his appeal is that he never tried to hide these weaknesses.

Erasmus was not a profound philosopher or theologian. His outstanding trait was a resolute faith in reason. He was scornful of ignorance, superstition, violence, and extravagance, and the themes of his life remained simplicity, purity, morality, and moderation. Through his vast general knowledge and witty, entertaining style, he became the popularizer of the new learning of the humanist tradition, and in that sense, remains the greatest example of the Renaissance ideal, the *uomo universale*—universal man.

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**ERASTUS**, ĕ-ras'tas, Thomas (1524-1583) German physician and Reformed theologian, considered somewhat erroneously the formulator of the doctrine of complete control of church by the state (Erastianism). He was born at Baden, near Zürich, on Sept. 7, 1524. His name was originally Lüder, but on entering the University of Basel in 1542, he adopted the Greek form Erastus. Supported by a rich uncle, he left Basel for Italy in 1544 to study philosophy and medicine at Bologna and Padua. In 1547 he became court physician to the Count von Hohenberg, in southern Germany. In 1558, at the invitation of the Elector Palatine, he became professor of medicine at the University of Heidelberg, where he soon obtained a doctorate in philosophy. In 1559 he was elected rector of the university. As rector, Erastus helped to strengthen the curriculum in medicine, sciences, and the humanities.

Expanding his interests to theology under Calvinist Elector Frederick III, Erastus served on the Palatine Church Council and participated in the theological controversies between Calvinist and Lutheran doctrines. A follower of the Reformer Zwingli, Erastus opposed both the Lutheran Eucharistic doctrine and the Calvinist teaching that the church alone had authority to deal with matters of discipline, including excommunication. He gained a reputation for this latter position. Erastus's theory assumes cooperation between church and state. He opposed excommunication in general. More basic to so-called Erastianism, however, was his use of the analogy of the Old Testament state to argue that the Christian ruler or religion state should properly administer church discipline. Although Erastus expressed himself only on this particular situation, his theory was later unfairly used to justify the complete subordination of the civil authority, not only in matters of punishment but in all church affairs. He died in Basel on December 31, 1583.

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**ERATO**, er'ə-tō, in Greek mythology, was one of the nine Muses. Her name in Greek means love. She presided over lyric and particularly erotic poetry, sometimes over hymns and music. Erato is usually shown crowned with roses and myrtle, playing a lyre. See also MUSES.

**ERATOSTHENES OF CYRENE**, er-ə-tos'thēnē (c. 276-195 B.C.) was a Greek mathematician, astronomer, geographer, philosopher, poet, whose varied talents earned him the title "pentathlete." Educated in Athens, he was sent to Alexandria (about 245 B.C.) by Ptolemy to serve as tutor to Ptolemy's son, Philo, and as librarian at the Museum. He died in Alexandria.

Although he was a prolific writer, his work survives only in fragments and in reports of other writers. He is best known for his ingenious measurement of the earth's circumference. By determining that the noon sun at the summer solstice stands almost directly overhead at a town of Syene (now Aswan), he measured the angle between the sun's rays and a perpendicular line at the same time in Alexandria. Assuming that Syene and Alexandria lie on the same meridian and that the sun's rays are parallel, he reasoned that the angle, which measured ap-

mus and the Reformers alike were combating. The "Diatrobe," clever as it was, could not lead men to any definite action, and this was precisely its merit to the Erasmians and its offense to the Lutherans.

As the popular response to the Lutheran summons become more marked and more widely spread, the social disorders which Erasmus

7. Doctrine dreaded began to appear. The Peasants' War, the Anabaptist disturbances in Germany and in the Low Countries (see ANABAPTISTS), iconoclasm and radicalism everywhere, seemed to confirm all his gloomy predictions. If this were to be the outcome of reform, he could only be thankful he had kept out of it. On the other hand, he was being ever more bitterly accused of having started the whole "tragedy." In Switzerland he was especially exposed to criticism through his association with men there who were more than suspected of extreme rationalistic doctrines. On this side the test question was naturally the doctrine of the sacraments, and the *crux* of this question was the observance of the Eucharist. Partly to clear himself of suspicion and partly in response to demands that he should write something in defense of Catholic doctrine, he published in 1530 a new edition of the orthodox treatise of Algerus against the heretic Berengar of Tours in the eleventh century. He added a dedication in which he affirms positively his belief in the reality of the body of Christ after consecration in the Eucharist, but admits that the precise form in which this mystery ought to be expressed is a matter on which very diverse opinions have been held by good men. Enough, however, for the mass of Christians that the Church prescribes the doctrine and the usages that embody it, while the refinements of speculation about it may safely be left to the philosophers. Here and there in many vehement utterances on this subject Erasmus lays down the principle, quite unworthy of his genius and his position of influence: that a man may properly have two opinions on religious subjects, one for himself and his intimate friends and another for the public. The anti-sacramentarians, headed by Ecclampadius of Basel, were, as Erasmus says, quoting him as holding views about the Eucharist quite similar to their own. He denies this with great heat, but in his denial betrays the fact that he had in private conversation gone just as far toward a rational view of the doctrine of the Eucharist as he could without a positive formulation in words. Naturally here, as in the case of free will, he could not command the approval of the Church he was trying to placate.

Thus, as the visible outcome of his reformatory activities Erasmus found himself at the close of his life at odds with both the great parties.

8. Closing Years. His last years were embittered by controversies with men toward whom he was drawn by many ties of taste and

sympathy. Notable among these was his passage at arms with Ulrich von Hutten (q.v.), a brilliant, but erratic genius, who had thrown himself with all his heart into the Lutheran cause and had declared that Erasmus, if he had a spark of honesty about him, would do the same. In his reply, *Spongia*

*adversus aspergines Hutteni* (1523), he displays, better than almost anywhere else, his skill in twisting words and phrases to suit the purpose of the moment. He accuses Hutten of having misinterpreted his utterances about reform and reiterates his determination never to take sides in the division of parties. When the city of Basel was definitely and officially "reformed" in 1529, Erasmus gave up his residence there and settled in the imperial town of Freiburg-im-Breisgau. It would seem as if he found it easier to maintain his neutrality under Roman Catholic than under Protestant conditions. His literary activity continued without much abatement, chiefly on the lines of religious and didactic composition. The most important work of this last period is the *Ecclesiastes* or "Gospel Preacher" (Basel, 1535), in which he brings out the function of preaching as the most important office of the Christian priest, an emphasis which shows how essentially Protestant his inner thought of Christianity was. The same impression comes from his little tract of 1533 on "Preparation for Death," in which the emphasis throughout is on the importance of a good life as the essential condition of a happy death. For unknown reasons Erasmus found himself drawn once more to the happiest of his homes, at Basel, and returned thither in 1535 after an absence of six years. Here, in the midst of the group of Protestant scholars who had long been his truest friends, and, so far as is known, without relations of any sort with the Roman Catholic Church, he died. So long as he lived he had never been called to account for his opinions by any official authority of the dominant Church. The attacks upon him were by private persons, and his protectors had always been men of the highest standing. After his death, in the zeal of the Roman Catholic reaction, his writings were honored with a distinguished place on the Index of prohibited books, and his name has generally had an evil sound in Roman Catholic ears. The extraordinary popularity of his books, however, has been shown in the immense number of editions and translations that have appeared from the sixteenth century until now, and in the undiminished interest excited by his elusive but fascinating personality.

EPHRAIM EMERTON.

[Ten columns of the catalogue of the library in the British Museum are taken up with the bare enumeration of the works translated, edited or annotated by Erasmus, and their subsequent reprints. It is a remarkable showing. The greatest names of the classical and patristic world are included, such as Ambrose, Aristotle, Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, Cicero, and Jerome.]

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**ERASMUS, SAINT.** See **HELPERS IN NEED, THE FOURTEEN.**

**ERASTUS, THOMAS, ERASTIANISM:** Swiss Reformed physician and theologian; b. probably at Baden (14 m. n.w. of Zurich), Switzerland, Sept. 7, 1524; d. at Basel Jan. 1, 1583. The name is Grecised from Lüber or Lieber. He studied theology at Basel and philosophy and medicine for nine years at Bologna and Padua. In 1558 he became physician in ordinary to the elector Palatine, Otto Henry, and professor of medicine at Heidelberg. In 1580 he went to Basel as professor of medicine and became also professor of ethics shortly before his death. He was considered a good physician and upright man, and established a foundation for the education of poor students in medicine at Basel and Heidelberg. As a student of nature he strenuously opposed the astrology, alchemy, and magic of Paracelsus and his school, though he approved of the death penalty for witches. It is as a theologian, however, that he is known and remembered. He was a follower of Zwingli, took an active part in the conferences at Heidelberg (1560) and at Maulbronn (1564), and defended the Swiss view of the Lord's Supper in a book *Vom Verstand der Wort Christi: Das ist mein Leib*, and again in a vindication of this work against Johann Marbach, a Lutheran minister of Strasburg (Heidelberg, 1565). Some years later he had occasion to defend his master's ideas against the Calvinists in a question of church polity. There was a Calvinist party in Heidelberg, headed by Caspar Olevianus (q.v.), which wanted to introduce a purely Presbyterian constitution, with a corresponding church discipline. Erastus strongly opposed the movement, but in vain. He was himself the first victim of the established discipline, being excommunicated on a charge of latent Unitarianism; after five years, however, he was restored.

Six years after his death G. Castelvetro, who had married his widow, published a work, written in 1568 and found among his papers, *Explicatio gravissimæ questionis utrum excommunicatio . . . mandato nitatur divino an excogitata sit ab hominibus* (Poschiavo, 1589). The book, written after the

fashion of the time in the form of theses, denies that excommunication is a divine ordinance, or that the Church has any power to make laws or decrees; and asserts that to inflict pains and penalties and to punish the sins of professing Christians belongs to the civil magistrates, not to pastors and elders. It attracted much attention and was attacked by Beza. English translations appeared at London in 1659 and 1682, and again, by R. Lee, at Edinburgh, 1844. Its views were adopted by a distinct party in the Westminster Assembly, headed by Selden, Lightfoot, Coleman, and Whitelocke. Since that time the doctrine of state supremacy in ecclesiastical causes generally goes under the name of Erastianism; though in its broad sense and wide application this doctrine is by no means due to Erastus or in accord with his views.

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**ERBKAM, erb'kām, WILHELM HEINRICH:** Councilor of the consistory and professor of theology at Königsberg, Prussia; b. at Glogau (35 m. n.n.w. of Liegnitz), Silesia, July 8, 1810; d. at Königsberg Jan. 9, 1884. He studied at Bonn, where he was chiefly influenced by Nitzsch and Bleek, and at Berlin where he was still more strongly and decisively influenced by Schleiermacher, with whom he was fortunate enough to come into close personal contact. Under Neander's guidance he devoted himself to the study of church history, and Marheineke introduced him to a closer study of systematic theology. In 1834 he went to the theological seminary at Wittenberg, where he made further progress in practical theology under the guidance of Rothe, at that time director of the seminary. Rothe guided his theological activity by directing his attention especially to Protestant mysticism and the sects proceeding from it. In 1838 Erbkam established himself as privat-docent in theology at Berlin, where he finally became professor and remained ten years, lecturing at first chiefly on the history of dogma and later on church history and systematic disciplines. During these years he was active also in the practical life of the Church, especially in preaching. He defended the full and whole truth of the revelation of the Gospel against the rationalistic unbelief and the half-believing theology of the Friends of Light (see **FREE CONGREGATIONS IN GERMANY**, § 1), who about 1840 protested against faithfulness to the Bible and the confession in the church as orthodox darkness, and attacked especially the *Evangelische Kirchenzeitung* and its editor, E. W. Hengstenberg. In 1847 Erbkam followed a call to Königsberg, where he taught church history and history of dogma, and subsequently exegesis, dogmatics, ethics, and symbolics. In 1857 he became councilor of the consistory of Königsberg and was also chosen representative of the theological faculty at the general synods of 1875 and